



Retirement Option 4





Retirement Option 4

When you retire, you can elect to have your benefits paid for your lifetime alone (your Unmodified allowance), or you can select one of the retirement options that allow you to provide a benefit to a beneficiary at your death. The benefits provided under these options are paid for through a reduction to your Unmodified allowance. The amount of the reduction is based on your age at retirement and the age of your beneficiary.

Options 1, 2, 2W, 3, and 3W are specifically defined in law. (Your CalPERS member booklet has a more detailed explanation and examples of these options.) Option 4 lets you choose a more customized benefit, as long as the amount to your beneficiary is not greater than the benefit provided under Option 2W.

There is no provision under an Option 4 calculation for your benefit to “pop up” to the Unmodified allowance if your named beneficiary dies before you do.

This brochure provides explanation and examples of the seven types of Option 4 allowances available.



It is strongly recommended that you request an Option 4 estimate before submitting your application for retirement. The estimate will provide detailed information on the benefits payable after your death so that you can make an informed decision. You can request an estimate by completing a *CalPERS Retirement Allowance Estimate Request* form and checking the box that describes the type of Option 4 you want to receive. You should allow 30 days to receive your retirement estimate.

Option 4 Examples

It's important to note that if Survivor Continuance applies to your allowance and your eligible survivor is not the same person you are naming for an Option 4 benefit, the allowance provided to the person named for the Option 4 benefit can vary from the examples that follow.

1. Specific Dollar Amount to a Beneficiary

You can specify the dollar amount of your monthly benefit you want to leave to your named beneficiary upon your death. The greater the amount left to the named beneficiary or the younger the beneficiary, the greater the reduction to your Unmodified allowance.

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For example, assume your Unmodified allowance is \$2,000 per month and you want your beneficiary to receive \$1,000 per month after your death. Depending on your age at retirement and the age of your beneficiary, your Option 4 allowance could be \$1,900 per month (plus any cost-of-living increases), paid until your death, at which time your beneficiary would begin receiving \$1,000 per month (plus any cost-of-living increases).

2. Specific Percentage to a Beneficiary

You can specify that a certain percentage of your Unmodified benefit be paid to your named beneficiary upon your death. The greater the percentage left to the named beneficiary or the younger the beneficiary, the greater the reduction to your Unmodified allowance.

For example, given the same Unmodified allowance of \$2,000 per month, you could elect Option 4 and leave 75 percent of your benefit to your beneficiary. Again, depending on your age and the age of your beneficiary, your Option 4 allowance could be \$1,850 per month. At your death, your beneficiary would be paid 75 percent of the allowance paid to you at that time (plus any cost-of-living increases).



3. Option 2W & Option 1 Combined

You can elect an Option 4 to provide that the same monthly allowance you receive will be continued to your named beneficiary at your death (if the beneficiary is alive), and you can specify that, after both you and your named beneficiary have died, any remaining balance of your contributions be paid to your secondary beneficiary.

For example, using the same \$2,000 Unmodified allowance, under this Option 4, \$1,800 a month could be paid to you until your death and then to your beneficiary for their lifetime. During your joint lifetimes, a portion of your benefits are funded by the money you contributed to CalPERS while you were working. If there are any contributions remaining after both you and your beneficiary have died (member contributions are usually exhausted in approximately (10 years), the unpaid balance would be paid in a lump sum to your secondary beneficiary. Members who choose this option usually have a substantial contribution balance they want to protect.



4. Option 3W & Option 1 Combined

You can elect an Option 4 to provide that one half of the monthly benefit you receive will continue to your named beneficiary at your death (if the beneficiary is alive), and you can specify that, after both you and your named beneficiary have died, any remaining balance of your contributions will be paid to your secondary beneficiary.

For example, using a \$2,000 Unmodified allowance, under this Option 4 \$1,900 a month could be paid to you until your death, and then your beneficiary would receive \$950 a month for their lifetime. During your joint lifetimes, a portion of your benefits are funded by the money you contributed to CalPERS while you were working. If there are any contributions remaining after both you and your beneficiary have died (member contributions are usually exhausted in approximately 10 years), the unpaid balance would be paid in a lump sum to your secondary beneficiary.

5. Reduced Allowance for Fixed Period of Time

You can elect to receive a specific reduced dollar amount or percentage of your Unmodified allowance for a specific length of time. After this time period, you will receive an increased allowance based on the actuarial equivalent of your remaining benefit.

The minimum you can elect to receive is 25 percent of your Unmodified allowance or an amount equal to the payable Survivor Continuance, if higher. This amount should allow for any deductions for health and dental benefits to be maintained, if you are eligible for those benefits. It can be based on your life alone or on the joint lifetimes of you and your named beneficiary.

If you name a beneficiary, the lesser allowance is paid to your beneficiary at your death, until the end of the specified time period. Once the specified time period has elapsed, your beneficiary will receive the higher allowance for life. This type of Option 4 allowance request requires actuarial staff to do individual calculations, so retirement processing time may be lengthened.

For example, using the Unmodified allowance of \$2,000, you could elect to receive \$1,000 per month for the first five years of retirement. Beginning with the sixth year, the benefit would be increased to \$2,500 per month for the rest of your life.



6. Multiple Lifetime Beneficiaries

You can elect an Option 4 that would provide a lifetime benefit to more than one beneficiary. (This would be different from the benefit offered under Option 2, 2W, 3, or 3W, which limit you to only one beneficiary to receive a lifetime benefit.) You can provide each beneficiary an equal share or designate specific dollar amounts or percentages of your benefit to each individual beneficiary.

An example of this type of Option 4 would be electing to provide a lifetime allowance to your two children at your death. In this example, your \$2,000 Unmodified allowance could be reduced to \$1,400 per month for your lifetime, but at your death, your two children could each receive \$700 per month for life.

7. Reduction on Death of Retiree or Named Beneficiary

You can specify a minimal reduction to the Unmodified allowance (at least \$1) to provide the highest benefit possible while both you and your beneficiary are living. Upon the death of either of you, the continuing benefit will be significantly reduced for the survivor.

This type of Option 4 allowance request requires actuarial staff to do individual calculations, so retirement processing time may be lengthened.



For example, assume your Unmodified allowance is \$2,000. You take a small reduction to that amount and receive \$1,999 per month for as long as you and your named beneficiary are both still living. At the death of either of you, the survivor will receive a substantially reduced benefit for the remainder of their lifetime. The amount of the reduced benefit will depend on your age at retirement and the age of your beneficiary.



For More Information

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CalPERS Regional Offices

CalPERS has eight regional offices throughout California to serve you. To get the address of the office nearest you, visit our Web site.

While reading this material, remember that we are governed by the California Public Employees' Retirement Law. The statements in this booklet are general. The Retirement Law is complex and subject to change. If there is a conflict between the law and this booklet, any decisions will be based on the law and not this booklet.



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